

Burns, Vanessa

From: julack@cox.net
Sent: Tuesday, March 01, 2011 7:17 AM
To: AppropriationTestimony

Dear Respected Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I want to thank you for accepting this written testimony in response to Governor Malloy's proposal to reduce DCF Parole Services Division by 22 case load carrying positions. My name is Mark Pawlich and I have worked for DCF as a Juvenile Parole Officer assigned to the Hartford area for over 15 years. In those 15 years I have seen a number of changes. The number of youth on an individual Parole Officer's case load back in 1995 when I started was about 35. Within years the Parole Division saw these case load numbers increase into the 50's and in some area offices Parole Officers were supervising case loads in the 60's. We were a crisis response driven department. Previous parole administrations requested positions to bring down case loads. A typical response was that DCF Parole Services and the youth in our care were not protected by the Juan F. Consent Decree and therefore there were no limits to case load size.

After years of requests; Parole Officer positions were filled. As the department grew, specialized units were developed to best serve the youth and families we were working with. Parole Services now has Gender Specific Units as well as a Sex Offender Treatment Unit. DCF Parole Officers continued to ask for and receive specialized training to again best serve the youth and families in our care.

DCF Parole Services was provided with a more user worthy computer system (Condoit) to assist managing our specific case loads. DCF Parole Services has developed specific assessment and evaluation tools that assist in best identifying youth and family needs and strengths. This has helped Parole Officers provide better services.

Parole Officers have seen a shift away from long term, costly residential treatment centers to shorter term, smaller programs that engage families. This shift has allowed Parole Officer's to access and provide services in the community at a much less costly burden to the system. With fewer Parole Officers providing supervision, there will be more youth incarcerated.

DCF Parole Services and the Juvenile Justice Bureau as a whole has embraced the Raise the Age Initiative and have started to see the number of cases increase because of this initiative. Parole Officers are not "losing" youth to the much more punitive adult correction system. Since October 1, 2010 DCF Parole Services has seen an increase of 80 youth and families receiving services. This is an increase between 20-25%.

Soon after former Governor Rell announced (11/2009) that she should would not be running for governor, she requested all commissioner's to propose a 10% budget decrease for their respected agencies. Previous Commissioner Susan Hamilton responded by proposing to eliminate 22 positions from the Parole Services Division. Again, because Parole Services and its clients are not protected by the Juan F. Consent Decree, it was easy to propose cutting over 50% of the Parole Service Division. Also to keep in mind, the original proposal and the current one never mentioned any reduction in management positions. This proposal is directed solely at case load carrying workers. This mid-budget proposal remained as such until it entered current Governor D. Malloy's budget. Neither former Governor Rell nor previous Commissioner Hamilton have a "seat at the table" anymore and will not have to respond to the potential disaster facing the youth and families that DCF Parole Services serve if this budget proposal to cut 22 Juvenile Parole positions goes through.

Mentioned earlier were previous changes DCF Parole Services has faced over the last 15-20 years. The two biggest changes facing DCF Parole Services at this time is the Raise the Age Initiative and the retiring of workers. DCF Parole Services supported the Raise the Age Initiative when it was just that, and now that it is law. These are exciting times for DCF Parole Services. The other change we are seeing is the loss of co-workers through attrition. In the last two years, and moving forward into 2012, DCF Parole Services has seen and will continue to see co-workers retire or leave the department at a rate not seen in over 15 years. Since 2009, Parole Services has not refilled any of these positions. If this proposal is endorsed, DCF Parole Services as a department will be decimated and the legs of the Raise the Age Law would be cut out from under itself. This small, specialized department cannot absorb another 22 lost positions.

In conclusion, this raised concern about position loss is more important to the youth and families DCF Parole Services serve each and every day than it is to any one individual.

Who will be able to advocate for the youth and families if this proposal is adopted?

Mark Pawlich
Juvenile Parole Officer
D.C.F.